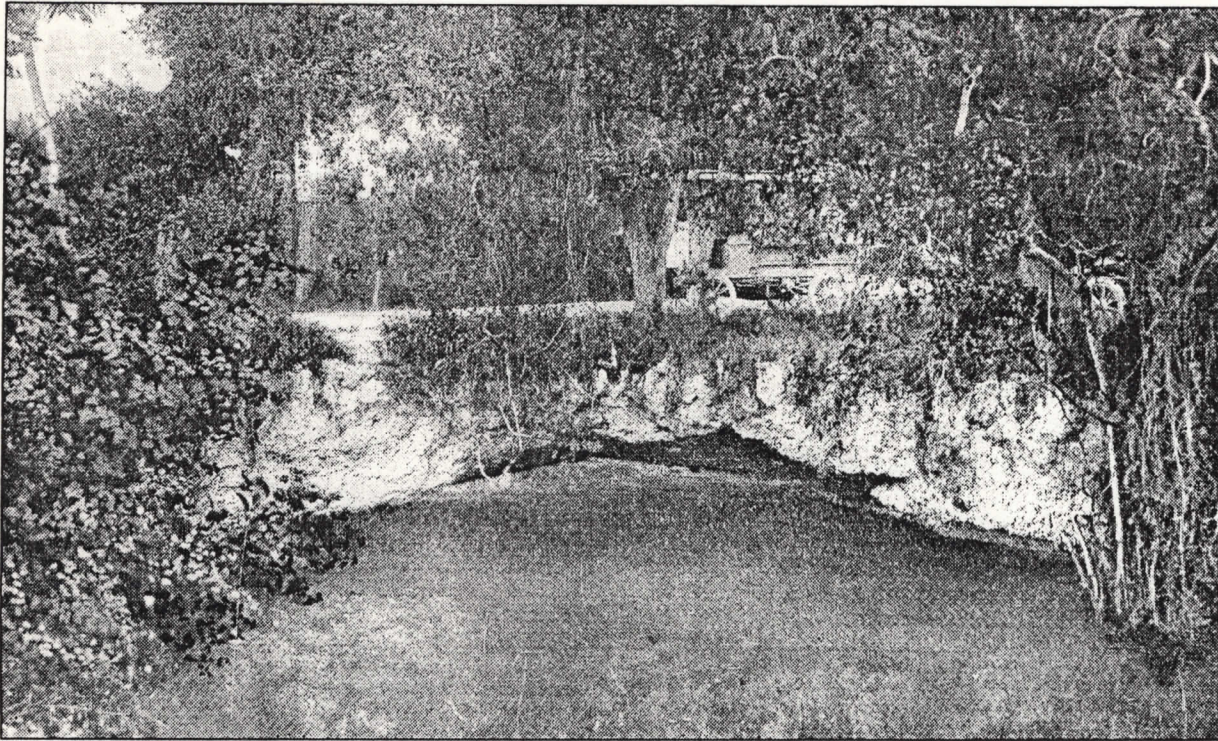


A SPECIAL SPAN



Herald File

THE ORIGINAL: The Arch Creek bridge, shown here around the turn of the century, mysteriously collapsed in 1973. It was rebuilt

15 years later as a monument to the original landmark.

Arch Creek endures with its beauty

Arch Creek Park, at 1855 NE 135th St. in North Miami, is a quiet park that offers natural beauty as its prime asset. The park's eight acres are rich in history, originally serving as the gathering site for Florida pioneers and Indians.



RENE RODRIGUEZ

HISTORY
AROUND US

The Arch Creek bridge, which spanned a stream running east from the Everglades to Biscayne Bay, was 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, was made of natural oolitic limestone. No one is sure how it formed. Some say it originated from a partially collapsed cavern roof; others say Arch Creek was originally an underground stream until erosion — or an earthquake — caused the ground to cave in,

except for the bridge, which remained standing.

Both Tequesta and Seminole Indians are believed to have periodically lived in the area from around the 1300s to the 1800s. During the Second Seminole War (1836-42), Indians were forced out of the area by U.S. soldiers.

In 1892, the first county road built at taxpayers' expense ran 60 miles from Lantana to Lemon City and crossed over the Arch Creek bridge. Dixie Highway, which opened in 1913, also originally crossed there. Because of its natural beauty, the site soon became a favorite place for picnics and outings.

The Florida East Coast Railroad built the Arch Creek station in 1903, which quickly led to the establishment of an entire town. A post office and school were opened by 1905. By 1920, more than 300 people lived in the Arch Creek community. Six years later, it was incorporated into the town of Miami Shores.

After World War II, the site

was developed as a trailer park. When the park was abandoned, Arch Creek became an illegal dump.

In 1971, the Chrysler Corp. bought the property for \$715,000. Initially, the company allowed archaeologists to explore the site, where numerous artifacts — some dating back hundreds of years — were excavated. Then in 1972, the company announced plans to build a used car lot on the site, resulting in a big public outcry. The state finally bought the property for \$822,000 in February 1973.

Just a few hours after the purchase, the bridge mysteriously collapsed. Although many environmentalists suspected sabotage, an investigation found no foul play. In 1988, a new bridge was reconstructed as a monument to the original landmark.

Arch Creek Park is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is free. The park office phone number is 944-6111.

Sources: "Arch Creek: Prehistory to Public Park" by Emily Perry Dieterich; *Miami: The Way We Were*, by Howard



Miami Herald Staff

Kleinberg; Miami Herald library.

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